



October 23, 2008

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director

THROUGH: Bill Whitney, Project Manager

RE: Highway 101 Greenbrae/ Twin Cities Corridor Improvements – Preliminary Screening Results. Agenda Item 14

Dear Commissioners:

Executive Summary

Over the past two years, TAM has been engaged in defining necessary improvements in the Highway 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Corridor. Last spring the Board received a presentation from staff summarizing an extensive public outreach effort used to develop a set of multi-modal improvement options that address congestion, improvement mobility and increase user safety within the Corridor. The Board considered the improvement options and directed staff to perform additional studies required to screen these options for future consideration.

Based on a comprehensive traffic analysis, estimated costs, general community and Council acceptance, and an initial assessment of environmental concerns, Southbound Improvement Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp) and Northbound Improvement Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) have been determined to best meet the project goals.

The results of the preliminary screening process have been presented to the Project's Technical Advisory Committee, the TAM Project Sub-Committee, the TAM Executive Committee, the Corte Madera Town Council, the Larkspur City Council and other project stakeholder groups. All parties briefed as part of the outreach efforts are supportive of our approach. During recent meetings with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) they have expressed support for the screening process but have asked for more details to better understand the pro's and con's of Northbound Improvement Option "D" (Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Flyover). Staff will continue to coordinate our efforts with Caltrans to provide the information requested as we move forward.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the TAM Board authorize staff to develop the scope and budget necessary to complete the Project Approval/ Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) Phase, and to adopt the conclusions of the Context Sensitive Design effort that supports Southbound Improvement Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp) and Northbound Improvement Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) as the preferred improvement options to be carried forward.

Background

At the April 24, 2008 meeting, the Board directed staff to complete additional studies and further screen the current corridor improvement options under consideration in order to reduce the number of viable candidates to be carried further into the environmental phase. At this meeting staff presented the four corridor improvement options in detail and summarized an extensive 22 month project development process.

The criteria used to evaluate and further screen the remaining four improvement options consist of (1) a comprehensive traffic operational analysis of each option and each potential combination of options, (2) project estimated cost, (3) general community and local Council acceptance and (4) an initial assessment of environmental concerns. Full documentation of the screening process and associated studies will be summarized in the environmental documents as required by CEQA.

South Bound Screening

Traffic Operations

While comparing the proposed Option "A" (Frontage Road) with Option "C" (Lucky/ Fifer Braided Ramp) it was determined that based on a comprehensive traffic operational analysis Option "C" performs better for both the local roadway system and the regional highway system. This analysis is based on future forecast condition through the year 2035. The analysis also indicated the Option "A" while providing congestion relief early in the study period causes vehicle delay on the local roadway system in the later years of the study period. For this reason, as well as the operational benefits of Option "C" it is recommended to consider Option "A" as the least desirable option.

Estimated Project Cost

Project costs are very preliminary at this point but both options are estimated to be in a similar range, with Option "A" estimated to be slightly less.

General Community and Local Council Acceptance

The community expressed interest in both options, but Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp) was initially considered less desirable to the Town of Corte Madera due to potential impacts to the local roadway system and access issues for surrounding businesses and residential communities. As a result of design modifications as well as developing a phased project approach towards implementation the local Councils are supportive of Option "C".

Potential Environmental Concerns

The environmental impacts will be studied in much greater detail as part of the next phase. Both options will require similar work on the existing structure crossing the Corte Madera Creek. Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp) consists of a braided ramp to eliminate traffic conflicts which will result in additional visual impacts. The proposed frontage road between Wornum Drive and Tamalpais Drive will be near adjacent wetlands, future design alignments will take all necessary steps to avoid these areas to the maximum extent possible.

North Bound Screening

Traffic Operations

While comparing the proposed Option "D" (SFD Flyover) with Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) it was determined that based on the traffic operational analysis both options performed well for the regional highway system but Option "E" provides better performance for the local roadway system.

Estimated Project Cost

Project costs are very preliminary at this point but both options are estimated to be in a similar range, with Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) estimated to be slightly less.

General Community and Local Council Acceptance

The community expressed interest in both options, but Option "D" (SFD Flyover) was considered less desirable to the City of Larkspur due to the undesirable visual impacts of a new structure over Sir Francis Drake Blvd and the continued and unresolved impacts to the local roadway system.

Potential Environmental Concerns

The environmental impacts will be studied in much greater detail as part of the next phase. Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) consists of a braided ramp at Wornum Drive which will result in additional visual impacts. Option "D" (SFD Flyover) will create a new vehicle crossing of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to eliminate traffic conflicts which will result in additional visual impacts. Option "D" will require significant work to the existing structure over Corte Madera Creek which may result in potential impacts to the marine environment.

Phased Approach

Based on the above assessment the SB Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp) and the NB Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) provide the best overall performance to meet the project goals. However concerns expressed over Option "C" do not meet our criteria of general community and local council acceptance. It is proposed that a phased approach towards the implementation of the SB Option "C" be considered to systematically improve the sub-standard conditions along the highway corridor. The design team has proposed a SB Option "C" Phase 1 that will address the current merge/weave conflict that currently exists on the highway in the area of the Sir Francis Drake Blvd on-ramp and the Lucky/Fifer off-ramp. SB Option "C" Phase 2 will address future traffic volumes by building the braided onramp and off-ramp in the vicinity of Lucky/Fifer, and SB Option "C" Phase 3 will complete the SB improvements by addressing the current merge/weave conflict that currently exists on the highway in the area of Madera Blvd and Tamalpais Drive. Phase 3 includes the re-construction of the Tamalpais Drive over-crossing (See attachments for further details)

Phased Environmental Approach

The combination of SB Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp), as phased, and NB Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) is estimated to cost more than the current funding will allow completing all the improvements as proposed. The design team is recommending a "hybrid" approach towards completing and obtaining the project approvals and the environmental determination that will allow the project to proceed. Both NEPA and CEQA require all improvements are addressed to include both immediate impacts of the constructable units as well as any cumulative impacts of the ultimate project improvements. This process will establish the plan line of the ultimate project and consider the full impacts to the entire corridor. This will be followed by a project specific determination for those elements that have identified funding and will eventually be built. The constructable units will demonstrate logical termini and establish independent utility. Because funding is limited, only the fundable projects will have a final environmental determination allowing them to go forward into the construction phase

Recent Outreach Efforts

The results of the preliminary screening process have been presented to the Project's Technical Advisory Committee, the TAM Project Sub-Committee, the TAM Executive Committee, the

Corte Madera Town Council, the Larkspur City Council and other project stakeholder groups. All parties briefed as part of the outreach efforts are supportive of our approach. During recent meetings with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) they have expressed support for the screening process as described above but have asked for more details to better understand the pro's and con's of Northbound Improvement Option "D" (Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Flyover). Staff will continue our coordination efforts with Caltrans to provide the information requested as we move forward.

Next Steps

With Board approval, staff will work with our consultants to develop the scope and budget required to complete the Project Approval/ Environmental Documentation (PA/ED).

Staff intends to bring an item before the Board next month that will update our Regional Measure 2 Initial Project Report and amend our contract for additional engineering and environmental service.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the TAM Board authorize staff to develop the scope and budget necessary to complete the Project Approval/ Environmental Documentation (PA/ED) Phase, and to adopt the conclusions of the Context Sensitive Design effort that supports Southbound Improvement Option "C" (Lucky/Fifer Braided Ramp) and Northbound Improvement Option "E" (Wornum Braided Ramp) as the preferred improvement options to be carried forward.

Attachments: Improvement Option Schematics

ACTION OF BOARD ON _____ October 23, 2008

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED _____ Yes _____

ACTION REJECTED _____

APPROVED WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS _____ N/A _____ (Describe modifications and/or conditions below)

VOTE OF COMMISSIONERS

AYES: Commissioners: Adams, Arnold, Kinsey, Moulton-Peters, Cock, Donnell,
Lundstrom, Breen Skall, Albritton, Dillon-Knutson

NOES: Commissioners: Maggiore

ABSTENTIONS: Commissioners:

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct reflection of an action taken and entered into the minutes of the Board of Directors on the date shown.

ATTESTED _____
Clerk to TAM